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**ASSESSING THE COAST GUARD'S
INCREASING DUTIES: A FOCUS ON DRUG
AND MIGRANT INTERDICTION**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OCEANS, ATMOSPHERE,
FISHERIES, AND COAST GUARD

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE,
SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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ASSESSING THE COAST GUARD'S INCREASING DUTIES: A FOCUS ON DRUG AND MIGRANT INTERDICTION

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15, 2016

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OCEANS, ATMOSPHERE, FISHERIES,
AND COAST GUARD,
COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:17 p.m., in room SR-253, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Marco Rubio, Chairman of the Subcommittee, presiding.

Present: Senators Rubio [presiding], Wicker, Ayotte, Sullivan, Cantwell, and Peters.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MARCO RUBIO, U.S. SENATOR FROM FLORIDA

Senator RUBIO. I'll call this hearing to order. And I want to thank all of you for being here.

Today's hearing is going to focus on the ever-evolving and increasingly vital missions the men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard face on a daily basis. They are at the premier—they are the premier lifeline when our boaters are lost, when our ports need securing, our coastal borders need protecting, and when many other essential needs arise.

When it comes to addressing the flow of migrants, my home State of Florida continues to be the state that needs the most resources. The Coast Guard has dealt admirably with the continued increase in Cuban migrants attempting to make it to our shores.

Because of the repression in Cuba, it's no wonder that so many Cubans are boarding makeshift rafts in the middle of the night to seek a better life. In fact, as what I believe is a direct result of the flawed policy changes towards Cuba, we've seen a 196% increase in migrant interdictions from the first quarter of 2014 to the same time period in 2016. And it's usually the Coast Guard that first encounters, and often rescues, those who have fled.

What is staggering is the lengths these migrants will go to evade capture, or force transport to a U.S. hospital. Incidents aboard Coast Guard vessels have included stabbing themselves with knives, swallowing hazardous materials such as fuel and bleach, self-inflicted gunshot wounds, and attempting to flee, often by jumping overboard in the middle of the sea. It was recently re-

ported that a migrant attempted to light a Molotov cocktail during an interdiction last summer.

It is these acts and the increase in violent and noncompliant behavior that put the men and women of our Coast Guard in additional danger. As the Admiral states in his written testimony, it is this capable and talented workforce that is the Coast Guard's greatest strength, and it is they who are best equipped to handle this extreme behavior.

Once migrants are first detected, the job of the Coast Guard has just begun. This is evidenced by the May 20 instance where 19 Cuban migrants climbed a lighthouse structure in the Florida Keys. While the Coast Guard was able to talk the migrants off the structure, the next day, two more migrants were found on the lighthouse. It was determined they had hidden during the previous day's interdiction. It was then reported that another individual from the same group was clinging to a piece of driftwood 4 miles from Sugarloaf Key. In total, 24 migrants await a decision on their fate from the courts aboard Cutter *Diligence*.

Today marks 26 days the migrants have been under the care of the U.S. Coast Guard, with a decision from the judge not expected for another 2 to 3 weeks. We must remember that, although the mission is to intercept and ensure safety of life, unfortunately scores of migrants who attempt to make the dangerous journey across the Florida Straits are not successful and succumb to the elements, or they drown.

I was fortunate enough recently to spend the day with the Coast Guard in Florida. I was briefed aboard the fast-response cutter, Margaret Norvell, on the protocols for interdicting and processing migrants. Every person brought on board is given medical treatment, food, water, shelter, and clothing. They are also provided access to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, where it's determined whether or not they qualify for asylum. If it's determined they do not qualify, it can be days or weeks before the migrants are repatriated to Cuba.

Migrant interdiction is not the only mission vital to ensuring the waters and well-being of the American people. As the lead Federal agency in charge of maritime drug interdictions, the Coast Guard is increasingly responsible for stopping the flow of illicit drugs into the United States. This year alone, the Coast Guard has seized approximately 290,000 pounds of cocaine, more than 41,000 pounds of marijuana, they've arrested 413 smugglers, and they've seized 119 vessels.

The drug rings that propel the illicit trades have vast resources to move narcotics into this country. And these organizations are using advanced methods of smuggling, as evidenced by the Coast Guard's recent intercept of two self-propelled semi-submersibles in the Pacific Ocean within the last year. These efforts prevented, by the way, 28 metric tons of cocaine from reaching our communities.

Search-and-rescue missions always represent a vital task of the Coast Guard. One only needs to turn on the news on many days in my home state to know that this is an apt description this—that their motto, “Semper Paratus,” means “Always Ready.”

In 2015 alone, the Coast Guard performed over 3,100 search-and-rescue missions off the coast of Florida. It's the Coast Guard that

quickly responded and did everything they could do to find Perry Cohen and Austin Stephanos, two teenage boys sadly lost at sea last summer. Just last week, the Coast Guard sector in St. Petersburg was able to locate and rescue five people aboard a disabled boat 60 miles off the Gulf Coast of Mexico.

And last, I would be remiss not to recognize the Coast Guard's valiant efforts in searching for the 33 souls who lost their lives aboard the *El Faro* last October. Hurricane winds would not stop them from seeking the cargo ship that ultimately succumbed to Hurricane Joaquin. These are just a few of many examples that show how much we rely on men and women of the Coast Guard to quickly respond when we need them the most.

In closing, Florida has an incredibly high rate of boating accidents. In 2015, there were 55 fatalities, 737 accidents. I know we can do better, and education is the key to accomplishing that.

We recently observed National Safe Boating Week, and I urge everyone to follow the tenets of responsible boating. I would note that the Coast Guard has provided a mobile app for boating safety, where you can find State boating information, a safety checklist, navigation rules, the ability to report a hazard or pollution, request emergency assistance, and other important features.

Admiral, I'm pleased you're here to address all of these important topics.

And I now turn over to the Ranking Member today, Senator Cantwell.

**STATEMENT OF HON. MARIA CANTWELL,
U.S. SENATOR FROM WASHINGTON**

Senator CANTWELL. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And I want to say that I'm just sitting in for Senator Booker, who is obviously on the floor, but I want to thank Admiral Zukunft for joining us today. And it has been a pleasure to work with you over the years, and work together on many accomplishments. I, too, would like to, as the Chair, thank you for your work on trying to rescue and recover on the *El Faro* situation. So, very, very important work, thank you.

You may be feeling a little more comfortable today because, for the first time in a long time, I know that we have, in a process moving forward, new funding for a polar icebreaker. And to me, and for those in the Pacific Northwest, we've had many hearings here where we have fought to secure new funding for an icebreaker. So, we're so glad that we are close with both the President's budget request including funding for a new icebreaker, which we both know has not been easy. So, thank you for your leadership. And now in the Senate there's \$1 billion for a new icebreaker in the defense appropriations bill. So, I look forward to working with you to continue to support the Coast Guard's effort for polar icebreaker recapitalization.

While icebreakers are a big deal, a bigger deal is all the work that we have done to support the Coast Guard's most important asset, the men and women of the Coast Guard, and their families. That's why we have worked together on doubling the paid leave opportunities for the women in the Coast Guard. And I know, in dealing with the Coast Guard, you have pointed out that about 40 per-

cent of your new recruits are women, and so, making sure that we get these policies correct is going to be very important for growing the workforce of tomorrow.

The Coast Guard bill that became law this year, we extended the combat-related special compensation benefits for Coast Guard members, because Coasties deserve the same benefits of others in uniform for our country. And we were even working together to make sure that Coasties stationed in one of what we think is the most beautiful parts of our state, the Station Neah Bay, gain access to broadband Internet. And I look forward to working with you more as we're fighting to make sure that healthcare access for Coast Guard families stationed at Cape Disappointment, near Sector Astoria, get the same healthcare benefits as people in other parts of the country.

So, I know these are—maybe seem like detailed points about the Coast Guard men and women living in the Pacific Northwest, but they're critically important for them to continue to do their mission. And I look forward to working with you on them.

I also recently sent a letter, this week, calling for necessary improvements to the Fishing Vessel Safety Compliance Program. I was joined by more than 30 bipartisan and bicameral members to talk about why we need to continue to make improvements in the Fishing Vessel Safety Compliance Program. And we have secured legislation, obviously, to improve oil spill response capabilities throughout Puget Sound and the Strait of Juan de Fuca, which we have to do a lot more to modernize the United States oil response and prevention policies. So, I look forward to being able to ask you about that, ways to improve the research and development and new cleanup technology, ways to make smarter vessel and traffic regulations to address near misses, and want to continue to work with the Coast Guard in leveraging the private sector to identify methods to clean up emerging oil spills, including tar sands, Bakken shale, and other emerging oil products.

So, thank you for this time, and look forward to having a chance to ask you questions. Again, thanks for being here today.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you, Senator Cantwell.

Admiral, are you ready with your statement?

**STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL PAUL F. ZUKUNFT, COMMANDANT,
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Admiral ZUKUNFT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Cantwell, members of the Subcommittee. I appear before you today with the utmost gratitude for the support that this subcommittee has provided for the 88,000 men and women of the United States Coast Guard.

I would, first, ask that my written statement be accepted as part of the official record.

Senator RUBIO. There is no objection.

Admiral ZUKUNFT. As I look across the Coast Guard's operations today, we remain globally engaged, often on all seven continents across the globe, to meet increasing mission demand. We are operating in both polar regions where human activity is increasing exponentially. We are managing emerging cyberchallenges in our maritime industry. We are combating transnational crime in our

western hemisphere, and we are keeping pace with changes in commercial maritime industry to ensure that we facilitate, and not impede, a vitally important industry that we regulate.

The tempo of operations, quite honestly, are the highest that I have seen in my 40 years of service with the United States Coast Guard. Fortunately, recent Coast Guard appropriations have advanced our long-term acquisition strategy and provided critical operating funds for new assets. You are helping us build a 21st century Coast Guard posture for mission success around the world. And I thank you for your incredible support.

In today's intelligence-driven operating environment, you need platforms, like our national security cutter, fast-response cutters, our new C-27J aircraft, and future offshore patrol cutters, to provide the tools we need to overcome an increasing complex operating environment. But, these platforms, quite honestly, are quite hollow without the men and women who bring them to life. It's why my strategy for investing in a 21st century Coast Guard is every bit as much about adaptable, diverse, and specialized people as it is about the ships, boats, and aircraft they will use to achieve national objectives.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to just spend a moment telling you about a few of the people who make our Coast Guard successful.

Maritime law enforcement specialist Megan DeBott, she is a pursuit mission commander assigned to the Coast Guard Cutter *Mohawk*. She just returned home last week, following a deployment to the eastern Pacific, where she led her team in the tactical pursuit and interdiction of six drug-laden vessels. These seizures netted over 9 metric tons of cocaine and detained over 16 smugglers, part of a critical effort to disrupt transnational criminal networks attempting to move illegal goods and people by sea. This year alone, we and our partners are on a record pace, having disrupted over 245 metric tons and detaining 391 narco smugglers to date this fiscal year. Critically, each of these interdictions attack the financial lines of the illicit cartels. They provide additional intelligence against future shipments. And, most importantly, they curtail violence and they posture greater stability to South and Central America. And, by reducing violence to ourself, we also reduce the arrival of unaccompanied minors that are flooding toward our southwest borders.

Maritime interdiction is a people-intensive operation. We must maintain multiple ready crews with highly trained personnel like Megan to launch at a moment's notice. And the training, proficient requirements, and skill to perform these high-risk tactical operations cannot be sustained overnight. And to that, at 25, *Mohawk* is our youngest medium-endurance Coast Guard cutter. It's the people that bring this cutter to life. And once the offshore patrol cutter comes online, there is much maintenance for our support personnel to contend with as we bring these new platforms to bear.

I'd also like to highlight the Coast Guard Cutter *Polar Star*, who successfully completed Operation Deep Freeze. In doing that, they had a failure in one of the generators and, two of their maintenance technicians, they actually used a surfboard repair kit to bring that generator back to life when they were literally thou-

sands of miles away from our support supply chain. And it's people like that, that keep our operations viable, as well.

And so, if you look at every component of the Coast Guard's 11 statutory missions, it's not the platforms. As Senator Cantwell had mentioned, it's the people. It's the people that I care dearly about in our 21st century Coast Guard.

I want to thank this committee for your tremendous support as we continue to advance our United States Coast Guard well into the 21st century. I look forward to hearing your questions.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Admiral Zukunft follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL PAUL F. ZUKUNFT, COMMANDANT,
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Introduction

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Committee. It is my pleasure to be here today to discuss Coast Guard missions.

The U.S. Coast Guard is the world's premier, multi-mission, maritime service responsible for the safety, security and stewardship of U.S. waters. At all times a military service and branch of the U.S. Armed Forces, a Federal law enforcement agency, a regulatory body, a first responder, and a member of the U.S. Intelligence Community, the Coast Guard operates on all seven continents and throughout the homeland, serving a nation whose economic prosperity and national security are inextricably linked to vast maritime interests.

The Coast Guard protects and defends more than 100,000 miles of U.S. coastline and inland waterways, saves thousands of lives per year, and safeguards the world's largest Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), encompassing 4.5 million square miles of ocean. Indeed, the Coast Guard is fully engaged answering the call and balancing a multitude of dynamic maritime risks facing our Nation.

The Coast Guard is also in high demand globally as an instrument of international diplomacy. Many nations model their maritime forces after the U.S. Coast Guard to address transnational crime, human smuggling, maritime safety and security, and foreign incursions into their respective waters.

Service to Nation

The Coast Guard has a proud, 225-year history of operational success. We safeguard the Nation's maritime interests through our broad authorities, unique capabilities, and vast partnerships.

To ensure our service is aligned with national strategies and best positioned to address these complexities, we have developed a five-year Strategic Intent and continue to focus on our Western Hemisphere, Arctic, Energy and Cyber strategies. By using these strategies as guideposts, leveraging the intelligence community, and employing a risk-based approach to direct our resources where they are needed most, we are able to address maritime threats with greater precision and effect. While I am proud of our achievements, work remains, and I look forward to continued support and partnerships within the Administration and with Congress to position the Coast Guard to fully address these increasingly dynamic 21st Century threats and challenges.

Southern Approaches and Transnational Organized Crime (TOC)

The Coast Guard, along with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), plays a pivotal role in securing our Nation's maritime domain. Persistent threats include illegal migration, human trafficking and illicit flows of drugs. The prevalence of Transnational Organized Crime (TOC) networks exacerbates these threats. TOC networks are driven by immense profits from drug trafficking and other illicit activity, and their indiscriminate use of violence weakens regional governments in Central America, stifles legitimate economic activity and development, terrorizes peaceful citizens, and fuels migrant flows.

Coverage by Coast Guard assets in the maritime approaches pays significant dividends by employing timely intelligence from an expanding network of partners. The new National Security Cutters (NSCs), Fast Response Cutters (FRCs) and our legacy cutter and aircraft fleets achieved impressive operational successes in Fiscal Year 2015. Critical acquisitions like the Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC), a more capable and reliable replacement for our outdated Medium Endurance Cutters (MEC),

are essential to our long-term success. We expect to take a major step forward in the OPC acquisition by down-selecting to one vendor by the end of Fiscal Year 2016.

In Fiscal Year 2015, the Coast Guard worked with interagency partners to help remove 191.8 metric tons of cocaine and detain over 700 smugglers for prosecution, 144 metric tons and 500 smugglers were removed by Coast Guard assets alone. We also repatriated 2,700 Cuban and 425 Haitian migrants, and we are closely monitoring maritime migration patterns as our relationship with Cuba continues to evolve. Thus far in Fiscal Year 2016, three NSCs alone have made over 25 drug interdictions in the Eastern Pacific, including two cases involving Self-Propelled Semi-Submersible vessels, stopping 28 metric tons of cocaine from reaching our streets. In fact, the Coast Guard is on track to have a record breaking year for drug removals, having already nearly eclipsed Fiscal Year 2015 numbers.

Polar Regions

Changes in weather patterns and ice continue to introduce risks and opportunities in the Arctic. As sea lanes open and access to natural resources increases, Coast Guard is promoting the safe and responsible use of this vital region. The Coast Guard adjusted our presence to better prepare for response when human activity and risk are greatest. This August, the cruise ship CRYSTAL SERENITY is planning an historic voyage from Anchorage, Alaska to New York City via the Northwest Passage. With over 1,000 passengers and 650 crew, the cruise sold out in weeks and is expected to prompt similar voyages in the future.

We have worked with the owners, as well as our Canadian partners, to increase the safety and security of this voyage and minimize the inherent risk in this challenging environment. The Coast Guard, in concert with our Arctic Nation partners, will continue to solidify maritime governance regimes, strengthen prevention and response capabilities and capacities, and increase awareness of this vast and rapidly changing region.

The formalization of the Arctic Coast Guard Forum is a major step in the right direction, as is the recapitalization of our icebreaker fleet, but enduring success hinges upon assured access and U.S. Sovereign rights in the Polar Regions. In this regard, our aging national icebreaking fleet cannot reliably meet our mission needs, and I look forward to continuing to work with the Administration and Congress to answer the President's call for new heavy polar icebreakers as soon as they can be built. Preserving maritime safety and security will require improved governance and enhanced unity of effort among our partners in the Polar Regions. Our national credibility and ability to protect our interests would be greatly advanced by a ratified Law of the Sea Convention.

Cyber Domain

Cybersecurity is not only a vital component of economic and national security, but it is also critical to our ability to fulfill the Coast Guard's statutory responsibilities. In addition to safeguarding our own networks from malicious cyberactivity, the Coast Guard is developing regulatory approaches that will instill stronger cybersecurity protocols into our Nation's critical Maritime Transportation System infrastructure. Thus far in Fiscal Year 2016, the Coast Guard has worked with industry partners to conduct cyber vulnerability assessments on vessels and facilities in the Ports of Houston, Miami, Seattle, and Savannah and will use the results to share cyber hygiene best practices. Our Area Maritime Security Committees (AMSC) are incorporating cybersecurity specific subcommittees into their current practices. Success hinges upon building, developing, and retaining an appropriate cyber skill set in our workforce. Given the growing global demand for cyber professionals, we will be challenged to remain competitive for this highly specialized and uniquely qualified workforce.

Maritime Safety, Security, and Stewardship

The prosperity of our Nation is inextricably linked to a safe and efficient Maritime Transportation System. Increased recreational and commercial waterway usage, coupled with growing domestic natural gas extraction and transport, deeper U.S. ports, and the expansion of the Panama and Suez Canals, lead to MTS congestion and continues to place more people and property at risk. Continued uncertainty and volatility in the domestic energy sector requires dynamic planning efforts on the part of the Coast Guard and its partners to effectively regulate existing and emerging technologies and ensure the safety, security and environmental stewardship of our Nation's waterways.

In Fiscal Year 2015, we completed more than 16,000 search and rescue cases, saving more than 3,500 lives, assisting 26,000 more and preserving more than \$432 million in property from loss. We responded to more than 2,800 oil spills, mitigating damage to sensitive natural resources. We also completed over 5,200 security in-

spections of maritime facilities, more than 8,500 small vessel security boardings and more than 20,000 security patrols of critical maritime infrastructure—and continued the deployment of six patrol boats and 250 personnel to protect critical Iraqi maritime infrastructure and to train Iraqi naval forces.

We also patrolled the largest EEZ in the world, protecting our sovereign rights and suppressing illegal fishing. We maintained the world's largest aids to navigation system, released more than 22,000 safety notices to mariners, identified more than 1,100 icebergs and expended over 14,000 operational hours to enable movement of commerce through ice impeded waters of the Great Lakes and Eastern Seaboard.

Building the 21st Century Coast Guard

History has proven that a responsive, capable, and agile Coast Guard is an indispensable instrument of national security, and funding 21st century Coast Guard platforms and people is an especially prudent investment. To ensure we are equipped to address the demands of our rapidly evolving operating environment, the Coast Guard, with the continued strong support of the Administration and Congress, will maintain momentum for ongoing asset recapitalization programs while also maintaining our track record of accountability as witnessed by three consecutive clean financial audits. Fiscal uncertainty presents challenges, but we are positioned to complete the NSC and FRC programs of record, award the contract for the OPC to replace vessels nearing 50 years of service, and conduct design work to accelerate the acquisition of Polar Icebreakers. These are all tremendous successes and critical for our Nation's 21st Century Coast Guard. However, our greatest strength is undoubtedly our people, and Coast Guard operations require a resilient, capable workforce that draws upon the broad range of skills, talents and experiences found in the American population. Recognizing our platforms are hollow without a capable and proficient workforce, we will continue emphasis on talent management by implementing our Human Capital Strategy and our Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan. Together, modern platforms and a strong, resilient workforce will ensure the Coast Guard is prepared to meet future challenges.

Conclusion

As we approach our 226th anniversary, history has proven that no other investment will return more operational value on every dollar than the extraordinary men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard—including 48,000 Active Duty and Reserve members, 8,500 civilians, and over 27,000 members of the Coast Guard Auxiliary. While many challenges still lie ahead, with the continued support of the Administration and Congress, the Coast Guard's future is bright and we will continue to live up to our motto to be Semper Paratus—Always Ready. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today and for all you do for the men and women of the Coast Guard. I look forward to your feedback and answering your questions.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you, Admiral.

I'm going to defer my questions, and I'm going to turn it over to Senator Wicker.

Did you need to run to the Committee?

STATEMENT OF HON. ROGER F. WICKER, U.S. SENATOR FROM MISSISSIPPI

Senator WICKER. Well, that'll give me a chance to follow up on what Senator Cantwell mentioned in her opening statement. And that's about the icebreakers.

Have you had time to review the Appropriation Committee's proposal to add \$1 billion for an icebreaker? To what extent would this funding increase—change your acquisition strategy? What aspects can be accelerated? And the appropriators added the funds to the Navy's account. Can you comment on why you think that was done rather than going directly to the Coast Guard? How do you envision partnering with the Navy? And what can you share with us about your acquisition strategy in this regard?

Admiral ZUKUNFT. Senator, thank you for the question. And yes, I have reviewed the Senate's proposal for the \$1 billion. But, let me tell you where we are right now.

The President's budget for 2017, that that would appropriate \$150 million, with that we've already submitted the operation requirements document of what we need a heavy icebreaker to do in the 21st century, not just from a Coast Guard perspective, but from every Federal entity that has equities in the polar regions—National Science Foundation, Arctic Research Council, Department of Interior, Department of Navy, a host of others. So, we've done that due diligence. We've shared with FedBizOpps of what the requirements are to stimulate industry's interest. And, if I were to go back 3 years ago, we held an industry day, and, at that point in time, we had several million dollars appropriated for researching new acquisitions of a heavy icebreaker. And we had maybe three interested candidates. We hosted an industry day, back in March. We had over 300—domestically, international shipyards. And so, we are very dialed in on accelerating the timeline. We are already hiring acquisition personnel to facilitate that process and even looking at parent craft designs so we don't have to start from scratch, but look at other heavy icebreaker designs and use that as a parent craft, if you will.

Back to the \$1 billion, that that has been—that that would be appropriated to the United States Navy. This would not be unprecedented. Our only medium icebreaker, the Coast Guard Cutter HEALY, was appropriated through U.S. Navy funding. What has changed since we acquired the Coast Guard Cutter HEALY is, we have stood up a—an acquisition force that I am immensely proud of, and we are used to working with the Navy on identifying standards, requirements, stable funding to be able to move this forward. So, we would not have to start a relationship from anew. And, at the end of the day, frontloading \$1 billion provides that full frontload up front that would allow us to accelerate final design award and, ultimately, construction of a heavy icebreaker.

Senator WICKER. Would you prefer that the funds be directly allocated through the Coast Guard than through the Navy?

Admiral ZUKUNFT. Senator, I'm agnostic to, you know, how it gets appropriated. We have been in a protracted fifteen year discussion about the polar regions, our need to recapitalize heavy icebreakers, and this is the closest to success that I have seen for as long as I have been intimately involved in the planning, the design work, and where we need to be in the Arctic region.

Senator WICKER. For the next two winters, what is your capability for icebreaking?

Admiral ZUKUNFT. So, our capability right now, we have one heavy operational icebreaker. That is the *Polar Star*. She routinely goes down to Antarctica to support the scientific mission down there. The Coast Guard Cutter HEALY, our medium icebreaker, is underway as I speak today supporting scientific mission and a number of other national strategic objectives up in the Arctic region.

Senator WICKER. OK. Now, when the seasons change, will that one in Antarctica be back up north?

Admiral ZUKUNFT. When the season changes, we will typically bring that one heavy icebreaker back. They are—they will go to a shipyard, do some refurbishment to get them ready to go again the

next year. It really takes a minimum of two heavy icebreakers to do the work that we do down in Antarctica.

Senator WICKER. So, your capability in the Arctic is now one. You'd like for it to be two.

Admiral ZUKUNFT. We have a high latitude study that actually, through a third party, would say we need three medium and three heavy icebreakers in our national inventory.

Senator WICKER. But, the plan now would be to give you two?

Admiral ZUKUNFT. Right.

Senator WICKER. All right. One other thing. About this, "Going to Need a Bigger Coast Guard Going Forward," in the SEAPOWEE magazine, can you explain to us the process you and your staff are using to allocate the limited funds you have, what missions are not receiving top priorities, and what would you correct, if you could?

Admiral ZUKUNFT. Well, we always talk about intelligence driving operations. And so, 2 years ago, you know, we looked at the flow of drugs, the amount of intelligence that we had. And the drugs are really destined immediately for Central America, en bulk. They're broken down to retail value and eventually smuggled into the United States. We had intelligence on about 85 percent of the drug flow in the maritime transit zones, where most of these drugs are being transhipped. On the best of days, we could target 10 percent. So, that means 75 percent gets a free pass.

When I looked at some of our distant water fishing vessel enforcement regimes, we are seeing compliance rates of over 90 percent. But, we're allocating a lot of resources, trying to get to 100 percent, when we have a 10% scorecard in the transit zone that is immediately impacting regional stability. So, we reallocated some of those resources to bolster our presence in the transit zones at a point in time where the United States Navy decommissioned the Perry-class frigates, which were really our stalwarts with Coast Guard law enforcement teams doing enforcement activity in those regimes.

So, those are tradeoff decisions that we have to make. How do we best manage risk to the optimum effect? And in—this is a point in time where we're seeing, having met with three—all three Presidents of the triborder region, a big cause of their security environment, causing them to be the most violent countries in the world, are the maritime landings of bulk shipments of cocaine that undermine rule of law, good governance, and ultimately are causing men and women to put their young children in the hands of a human trafficker to find a safe haven here in the United States.

Do we have all the resources we need to do the job? No. But, we are clearly focused on the areas that, through leveraging all of the wealth of our national intelligence community of, Where do our authorities resonate most? And many of those are right here in this hemisphere, even though, yes, we are spread across the world. But, where we are stacked the most are here in our western hemisphere, protecting our U.S. maritime borders.

Senator WICKER. Thank you, sir.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

Senator Cantwell.

Senator CANTWELL. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Following up on this Coast Guard discussion of icebreakers, you talked about the *Polar Star*, which is being refurbished and then it'll head to Antarctica, and then the HEALY. But, don't—doesn't the United States require, like, six heavy and four medium polar icebreakers to meet the Coast Guard and Navy's missions for the future? And doesn't the Navy acquire vessels, you know, at least, like, three per class, so that we actually have the resources? Doesn't the Coast Guard follow a similar model?

Admiral ZUKUNFT. We do, Senator. And we usually say it takes three to make one. You have one ship that is persistently present. And if it's in the polar regions, it takes a while to get there. You come back, and that ship—you know, they're breaking ice, and they have to go into a shipyard, so they're taken off cycle. And, meanwhile, you have a third ship that's ready to deploy and fill the void left by the ship that just returned. So, whether it's an icebreaker or whether it's an aircraft carrier, whether it's a fast-response cutter, a national security cutter, the three-to-make-one model is pretty consistent across all fleets, not just U.S.—

Senator CANTWELL. How many—

Admiral ZUKUNFT.—but worldwide.

Senator CANTWELL. Thank you. Thank you.

How many nations are laying claim to the Arctic? And how many icebreakers do they have? Do they have at least more than one icebreaker to manage their oversight of that region?

Admiral ZUKUNFT. I'd probably just mention—I just met, this past Thursday and Friday, with all of the Arctic Coast Guards. We stood up on Arctic Coast Guard Forum while the United States chairs the Arctic Coast Guard—the Arctic Council. And so, Russia has 40—

Senator CANTWELL. Forty icebreakers?

Admiral ZUKUNFT.—41. They are in the process of completing another nuclear carrier. It will be the most powerful nuclear icebreaker in the world.

When I sit down with the other Coast Guards, we recognize the vastness of the Arctic, the increase in human activity, that none of us, singularly, have all the resources we would need to respond to a mass rescue, to respond to an oil spill if we see offshore drilling up in the Arctic domain. That's incumbent upon the Coast Guards of the Arctic to work together. We will meet again—

Senator CANTWELL. But, you're not saying that our response to a—an oil spill or something in the Arctic is, "Call the Russians."

Admiral ZUKUNFT. We may have to. And so, if you want to hold that thought, I'd go back to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. I was the Federal on-scene coordinator. We had over 20 filled requests for international assistance. We didn't have enough skimmers in our United States inventory. Russia today would be problematic. Where is our relationship with Russia going to be 20–30 years in the lifetime of a heavy icebreaker? So, I need to think beyond the present, but how do we look at brokering those assets? We do know that, if there's a vessel in distress, it doesn't matter what our tensions may be; the rule of a Good Samaritan will come to bear.

Senator CANTWELL. Well, I'm going to leave the response to that to my able colleague from Alaska, who I think will join with me in saying we don't think the United States response to the Arctic

should be, "Call the Russians." But, I'll let him follow up on that, because I have to ask you two other things.

One, this region, out in our coast, that does such a great job at the mouth of the Columbia River, which is a very challenging area, so they are training our National Motor Lifeboat School, they're doing tremendous work. The mouth of the Columbia River out to the Pacific, as you know, vital for so many economic interests, yet these people can't get the healthcare that they deserve. So, I need your help, in working with DOD, to make sure that they get TRICARE Prime Remote. It is remote. So, I don't understand why and what's happened here, but these families that are doing a great job and I can also tell you, I'm putting a lot of heat on them, as well, as it relates to, What is our response to a tsunami or Cascadia Fault situation? So, we want people there to serve our country, to feel like they are not second-class within the Coast Guard because they get a lesser healthcare status, and we want them to be great participants in this big challenge to a Pacific very flatland area that has to face tsunami threats all the time. So, can we get your help with that, working with the Department of Defense?

Admiral ZUKUNFT. Senator, first, I appreciate your tremendous support for our men and women. And that was the inappropriate categorization of a—an outpatient clinic that we have that was then designated as a military treatment facility, which, as you are well aware, is not, which placed our dependents at a great disadvantage. So, I share in your ardor to correct that wrong.

Senator CANTWELL. Great. I will look forward to working with you.

I'll submit something for the record, but obviously the Strait of Juan de Fuca and continuing to focus on oil spill response plans is something of very high concern. Again, we don't want the Canadians to do the antithesis of what we just talked about in the Arctic and have an oil spill and then say, "Call the Americans." We don't want that, either. We'll submit a question for the record.

And thank you for being here today.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

Senator Ayotte.

**STATEMENT OF HON. KELLY AYOTTE,
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE**

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you, Chairman.

Thank you, Admiral.

I wanted to follow up. I know your initial testimony about the important work that the Coast Guard is doing on drug interdiction and disrupting transnational drug networks. And, as you know, in February, the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Campbell returned to Portsmouth Naval Shipyard after a 61-day counternarcotics patrol of the Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific Ocean. As I understand it, the Campbell seized about 4800 pounds of cocaine worth more than \$80 million. And these shipments from South American were bound for the United States.

I would like to ask you, in terms of your interdiction efforts, there's another issue. I know that that was a very significant amount of cocaine, obviously worth a tremendous amount of money.

We're also facing a heroin epidemic. And I know that a good deal of it is actually coming over on the land side, but wanted to get your thoughts on what the Coast Guard is seeing, in terms of the heroin issue on the water side. And also, especially, what kind of cooperation do you have—I serve on the Armed Services Committee—with NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM, with your interdiction issues?

Admiral ZUKUNFT. I'll first talk about, you know, opioids, heroin. You know, in a maritime domain, we see very little of it. We've seized probably a little over 50 kilos, which is still a lot of heroin—

Senator AYOTTE. That's a lot of heroin, yes.

Admiral ZUKUNFT.—that were commingled with cocaine shipments. This was originating from Colombia. As you are well aware, the opioids, the heroin that is now flooding all the communities—State of New Hampshire, especially—is originating in Mexico.

My other role as Commandant is, I also chair the Interdiction Committee within the Office of National Drug Control Policy. We have started a campaign called Farm to Arm, of—how do we look at regional demographics of heroin overdoses laced with Fentanyl? And how do you get beyond a province, how do you get beyond a State and then trace it back to the Southwest Border to really get at the hub of this activity whose origins are really in Mexico?

Senator AYOTTE. Right.

Admiral ZUKUNFT. And so, that is the challenge that we see, going forward. I am especially concerned as we see more and more Fentanyl being introduced—

Senator AYOTTE. As you know, Fentanyl is—

Admiral ZUKUNFT.—and there's worse to come.

Senator AYOTTE.—up to 50 times more powerful. I mean, essentially 1 gram of Fentanyl—according to CDC, 7,000 doses of heroin, the equivalent, in terms of on our streets. So, where do you see heading up this committee as you look about the southern border and the—this coming from Mexico—what efforts, collectively, in your role in—as the lead of that task force, that you think you need additional support on?

Admiral ZUKUNFT. Most of this, as you highlighted, is coming across our southwest border through our ports of entry. And very lucrative means of, How do you secret, you know, grams of cocaine? People that will walk across the border having swallowed this.

Senator AYOTTE. Yes.

Admiral ZUKUNFT. And then it be covered at some point later on. So, very, very problematic in, how do we detect this? And recognizing, you know, the addictive characteristics of opioids, as well. It's a two-part campaign. And it's a campaign. We've never been in a war on drugs. It's a campaign. And just as much as we need to interdict, we also need to look at the—How do we reduce the supply of this? How do we rehabilitate the addicts?

Senator AYOTTE. And the demand end, right, the treatment and the recovery—

Admiral ZUKUNFT. Right.

Senator AYOTTE.—which is certainly something that—you know, we passed a really good piece of legislation, I was proud to be a

lead sponsor of, in March, called the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, so dealing with both sides.

Well, I appreciate your testimony today and want to thank you for the efforts that the Coast Guard is making, in terms of the interdiction, because that really is critical on the supply side. I mean, our law enforcement, this is something they can't do alone, and they really need the support on these transnational networks, and also the work that you're talking about with other countries to get them to step up their game in their own country.

Admiral ZUKUNFT. Thank you, Senator.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you.

Senator RUBIO. Senator Peters.

**STATEMENT OF HON. GARY PETERS,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MICHIGAN**

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, Commandant, for your testimony today.

As I know you're aware, Michigan residents value the Coast Guard's very important role in the Great Lakes. With an international border, seasonal ice cover, year-round outdoor recreation, and a very robust maritime transit industry, the Coast Guard provides critical support for law enforcement, search-and-rescue operations, icebreaking, and environmental protections throughout the Great Lakes.

Michigan is also lucky to have the men and women of the Coast Guard as members of our coastal communities. This appreciation for the Coast Guard is evident across Michigan, from the volunteers in the Coast Guard Auxiliary who support Coast Guard missions each and every day to the Annual Coast Guard Festival in Grand Haven, Michigan, which, I may say, was the original Coast Guard City USA. Put that in the record for everyone to remember.

In light of the Coast Guard's essential role across the Great Lakes, I am concerned with a proposal to make seasonal multiple boat stations in the region, including four stations that are located in Michigan. And I worry that such a proposal would remove valuable staff and resources during the off season, when a rapid response to a call to help or for an oil spill is critical to saving lives and protecting the environment, regardless of when it occurs.

I just want to say for the record that I appreciate the Coast Guard's responsiveness to discussing this issue. My staff has had a number of conversations with folks from the Coast Guard. They—you have been—your office has been very responsive. But, I intend to continue to follow up. I know the communities that I am blessed to represent have many more questions, and we'd like to see some of those responses in writing as to the process being used and the rationale for closing some of those stations, and look forward to working closely with you, Admiral, on that.

I'd like to start off by kind of continuing the theme of icebreakers, which we've heard quite a bit about your polar icebreakers. But, of course, in the Great Lakes, especially in recent winters, we have seen some very heavy ice cover in the Great Lakes, as well. In fact, some recent winters have cost the region, it's been estimated, potentially thousands of jobs and \$1 billion in lost revenue as a result of the incredibly heavy ice cover.

As you know, the Coast Guard is required by law to keep shipping channels open and clear during the winter months. But, I am concerned that our one heavy icebreaker, the Mackinaw, and the rest of what is a very aging fleet on the Great Lakes do not have the capacity that you're going to need to execute this icebreaking mission in the years ahead.

A bipartisan group of Senators from the Great Lakes shares my concern. I'm not alone in expressing this, as you know, which is why we have all joined a letter to the appropriators asking for robust funding for the design and construction of a new heavy icebreaker on the Great Lakes. And I was pleased to see the Appropriations Committee heeded this request by including a \$2 million mark for the initial work on this new Great Lakes icebreaker that would be at least as capable as the Mackinaw in cutting through freshwater ice.

I would like you, if you would, Commandant, just share for us and the committee your concerns about capacity on the Great Lakes and your support for building an additional icebreaker for the needs there.

Admiral ZUKUNFT. Yes. Senator, our near term is, one, restore into a service life extension program on our 940-foot inland icebreakers. And, in years past, we have pulled some from the lower States to augment when we had—especially 2014 being nearly 95 percent ice coverage of the Great Lakes. At the same time, we've entered into a memorandum of agreement with Canada. And so, being able to leverage their heavier icebreakers, as well.

So, when I look at icebreakers, writ large, I have to look at my biggest concern, which goes back to my heavy polar icebreaker. If that becomes beset in ice in, say, Antarctica, I have no self-rescue capability whatsoever. In the Lakes, I do have that.

Also well aware of the fact that I have a legislative requirement to keep those waterways open, as well, to facilitate commerce. And so, if we look at 2014, I don't know if I had a—if I had a second Mackinaw, if I would have been able to make my program goals, as well.

I am not a climatologist. And so, we need to look at, you know, What does the future portend? But, we will have to recapitalize the Mackinaw at some point in time. Do we need to do it today? Right now, I am recapitalizing our national security cutters, fast-response cutters, a new offshore patrol cutter that will award final design at the end of this Fiscal Year, a heavy icebreaker. And so, I will need—would need a lot of lift to think I could recapitalize five ships, you know, all in the same increment. So, it's a question of, you know, how much can we take on at one point in time?

Near term is, extend the service life of those 940-foot icebreakers. This year did buy us a reprieve, in that we did have a lighter ice season. But, I can't bank on hope and luck, that that's going to pervade into the future, as well.

With that, I have a discussion with our Canadian counterparts on the fifth of July to look at what—their recapitalization strategy, as well, for their inland icebreakers, so we don't look at one another and find out that we have sold ourselves short on this, as well. It does have my full attention, Senator.

Senator PETERS. Well, I appreciate that. And that capacity in the Great Lakes, as you mentioned, to maintain the maritime commerce, which, of course, is critical, but the other concern that we have in Michigan, and we have talked about this in the past, relates to oil spill response. So, we have an aging pipeline in the Straits of Mackinaw, which a recent University of Michigan study stated that if there was a pipeline break in the Straits, it's the absolute worst place to have a break anywhere in the Great Lakes basin, which would threaten the drinking water to—as you know, over 40 million people drink water out of the Great Lakes. Having an oil spill there, and in freshwater, which technology is somewhat limited as to how we actually clean up, that is a concern.

We recently passed the Safe Pipes Act that required folks to put together response plans in heavy ice, which I was surprised to hear was not part of plans or requirements, at least in the past. And, as you know, the Straits of Mackinaw can be covered with very thick ice, which would make cleanup very difficult if it occurred at that time. We also have the St. Clair River, which also has a number of pipes, that also gets completely closed in ice.

Could you respond or assess some of your concerns about cleaning up an oil spill with heavy ice cover in the Great Lakes, given the limited capacity of icebreakers as well as the challenges of cleaning up an oil spill in freshwater?

Admiral ZUKUNFT. Senator, we've spent a fair amount of research on removing oil in an iced environment. One of the catalysts for that, when we saw shale drilling up in the Chukchi Sea, but certainly the same phenomenon applies in the Great Lakes. I've been to the research facility where we've looked at this, and it does cause me concern, as well, if you were to have a major oil spill in an iced environment. And, as you're well aware, that ice, even if you break it, it moves with the shifting currents. So, it is a challenge for us.

We're also working with our National Response Team here. You have different types of oil. One that Senator Cantwell had alluded to is tar sands, or what we call bitumen, that has roughly the same specific gravity as water, and so it doesn't float; now it sinks. And if it sinks, does it then get into our water intake?

So, all of those are truly concerns of mine, and the technology of removing ice—oil in an iced environment is going to be challenging for us to do so in a major oil spill during an ice season.

Senator PETERS. Well, I appreciate that. And, of course, being in freshwater, as well, a number of—my understanding, a number of the techniques used to clean up oil don't necessarily work in freshwater—

Admiral ZUKUNFT. Right.

Senator PETERS.—particularly freshwater that may be used for drinking water.

And you talked about the currents of ice. As you're well aware, the Straits of Mackinaw, the amount of volume that goes through—water volume that goes through the Straits of Mackinaw is equal to ten times that of Niagara Falls. Those are some pretty strong currents and an awful lot of pressure on that ice, which complicates it.

So, I look forward to working with you. We have to make sure we're protecting that valuable resource. And I thank you for your efforts.

Admiral ZUKUNFT. Thank you, Senator.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

Senator Sullivan.

**STATEMENT OF HON. DAN SULLIVAN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM ALASKA**

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, Admiral, good to see you again, sir.

I want to follow on. As—pretty much every member of the Committee is talking about the need for icebreakers. And I would fully agree with Senator Cantwell that calling the Russians is not a good national strategy for the United States with regard to our interests in the Arctic, which are growing, as you know. Huge resources for the country. Very important new sea lanes of commerce.

So—and I believe when you said the Russians have 40 icebreakers, it's—some of them are nuclear, and it's—I think they have 13 more they're planning on coming online. So, it's going to be up to 53. We have two. One is barely operational.

Given that we have all these interests and that the Russians are very active, and so are other countries with more icebreakers than us, some countries that aren't even Arctic nations—and again, I like to remind my colleagues here, America's an Arctic nation because of the State of Alaska—but, is three medium icebreakers and three heavy icebreakers—is that enough to meet our national security interests and our commercial interests?

Admiral ZUKUNFT. Senator, in the world as we know it today, I would stand behind, you know, three heavy and three medium.

Senator SULLIVAN. Why would you stand behind that, when the Russians have 53 and other countries, much smaller countries, have more than we do?

Admiral ZUKUNFT. Well, when you look at Russia—and I'll acknowledge, Russia has been very transparent on how they use their icebreakers.

Senator SULLIVAN. So, you think three medium and three heavy is enough to meet the needs—national security and economic needs of the United States.

Admiral ZUKUNFT. I do.

Senator SULLIVAN. I would just beg to differ. Maybe you can lay out your analysis for the record, in terms of a question on that, relative to what is happening in the Arctic and relative to what the Russians are doing in the Arctic, and how you can say—it seems to me that three will end up having a “Call the Russians” as our ultimate strategy, which is unacceptable.

And, you know, Admiral, it—there is a bipartisan consensus. We haven't seen that. Even the President, when he was in Alaska, acknowledged the icebreaker gap. So, I think we can do much better than that. But, you're starting to see the Congress move on that, which is important.

Related to that, there's often this figure that's \$1 billion to build a heavy icebreaker. Is that correct? And is that an accurate figure? It seems very high to me.

Admiral ZUKUNFT. Yes. That's an estimate. And we have not built a heavy icebreaker in over 40 years. Our industrial complex has not laid up hull thickness for vessels of that size in the same amount of time, so there would be front-end investments. So, it is somewhat speculative of what that dollar value is.

But, when we look at what you need an icebreaker to do—to exert sovereignty, to be a floating command post, to sort—support a scientific mission, to provide maritime domain awareness—it's a pretty wide spectrum of capabilities you're putting on one platform.

We also recognize that, what would the response protocol be in the high latitudes? Do you invest in shore infrastructure, or do you invest in at-sea infrastructure? At least for the near term, it would probably be more prudent for us to invest that at-sea infrastructure, not knowing what the next 20 to 30 years might have in store with melting permafrost and the like.

Senator SULLIVAN. Let me ask—Senator Peters was talking about the legislative requirement to keep the Great Lakes sea lanes open. Is there a similar legislative requirement to keep the Arctic sea lanes open?

Admiral ZUKUNFT. Senator, not that I'm aware of.

Senator SULLIVAN. OK.

Let me turn to your broader recapitalization plan, Admiral. I was just recently out in Kodiak, spent the whole day with your fine young men and women out there. You know, that's, I think, an outstanding, outstanding air station, you know, maritime station for the Coast Guard, but it also, certainly to me, reminded me of just the vast, vast coverage that the Coast Guard has with regard to our interests—maritime, fishing—off the coast of Alaska.

The recapitalization plan that the Coast Guard put forward calls for eight national security cutters, 25 offshore patrol cutters, total of 33 major cutters, which represents a 25% reduction in the total number of major cutter hulls. In Alaska, there's going to be—we have seven 110-foot island-class cutters that are going to be replaced by six fast-response cutters. Given that there's so much increasing activity, whether it's fisheries, whether it's the Arctic, whether it's search and rescue, does it make sense to replace seven with six? It would seem to me we need to be going in the opposite direction, particularly when the GAO has come out, in a 2014 report, had some questions about the new fast-response cutters meeting their operational capacities that they have advertised.

And then finally, given, again, all the interest in the Arctic that we have, I believe the closest national security cutter to the Arctic is in California. Doesn't it make sense to replace the 110 cutters, island-class, with at least the same or more, in terms of fast-response cutters, and to have a national security cutter based in a geographic part of the world that's increasingly important and has coverage that, as you know, Admiral, is enormous? And right now, Kodiak plays a big role in that, and they have to fly sometimes thousands of miles just to get to activities where they're keeping Americans safe.

Admiral ZUKUNFT. Yes.

Senator SULLIVAN. I know that's a lot of questions. I tried to pack them in before the Chairman cut me off here.

Admiral ZUKUNFT. So, let me, first, address our island-class, our seven, that will be replaced with six fast-response cutters. Those island-class boats, they run at about 1,850 hours per year. And, quite honestly, right now they're not meeting that level, due to unscheduled maintenance. The new fast-response cutters are programmed for 2,500 hours a year. So, you know, for each hull, you end up getting 650 more operational hours, times six. So—

Senator SULLIVAN. But, is—GAO study confirm all that? I thought that was saying some of the operational efficiencies of the incoming cutters are not as advertised.

Admiral ZUKUNFT. I would be happy to brief you on the GAO report separately. That was really looking at boats, and boats that are iced in on the lakes in the winter, which is why we had to address seasonalization. So, it might be—you know, there might be some mischaracterizations there. But, we are getting great utility out of these fast-response cutters, which is why we looked at, at the end of the day, How much at-sea presence do we have? And it actually increases, and they can operate in much greater sea states than those island-class boats can, as well.

As I go back to our national security cutters in the bed-down plan, where we home-port those, these transit at a much faster speed. So, from Alameda to the Bering Sea, it's less than 5 days. They deploy for 210 days out of the year.

Senator SULLIVAN. Five days is a long time if you're sinking in the Bering Sea.

Admiral ZUKUNFT. There's always one there. And so, we always make sure we have persistent presence in the Arctic. But, the challenge for me, Senator, is not—is the out-year cost. The title—total lifecycle cost of a national security cutter. It's not the front-end acquisition, it's the maintenance that goes with that. And a lot of this maintenance, with smaller crews, has to be contracted out, which is why we cluster ships of the same class in one home port.

Kodiak is the optimal port for our offshore patrol cutters, where we would home-port two of those cutters. And they're designed with the Bering Sea in mind. The reason we put Sea State 5 in that requirement was with the Bering Sea in mind, first and foremost. Sea State 5 means they can operate routinely in seas up to 11 feet. They can launch and recover helicopters in those sea states. Our existing 378s cannot. So, that was really the thought, going forward, of, Where do we cluster these? But, we need to put more than one ship of the same hull type in a given home port. And that's where we're looking at Kodiak.

The other piece of that is, we need to make sure we have the other infrastructure—the housing, in particular—to support the crews and then the people that maintain those ships, as well. So, all of that is being looked at collectively.

And, make no mistake, you know, Kodiak is Coast Guard country. Alaska is Coast Guard country. And we will be invested in Alaska for the long haul, going forward. Our reinvestment strategy has Alaska very, very frontloaded into that thought process.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Admiral.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I'm going to submit, for the record, an additional question. Senator Murkowski and I are submitting a letter to you, Admiral,

that relates to the recent changes in the restricted operator of uninspected passenger vessel regs that recently came down that we think could severely negatively impact the guiding industry. And we want to get your questions on that for the record.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral ZUKUNFT. Yes. Senator, if I can just take that, you know, on the record. I will—I am revisiting that very same regulatory process. I have fished with those guides up there.

Senator SULLIVAN. Yes.

Admiral ZUKUNFT. The provision that concerns me the most is the 360 days for a new entrant to be able to enter into this world of work. I recognize the seasonality that goes with that, as well. So, I will take it upon myself and with my staff to work with yours to come with a commonsense solution to this problem set.

Senator SULLIVAN. Excellent. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

And, Admiral, you'll be pleased to know, I'm—we're probably done with our icebreaker questions.

[Laughter.]

Senator RUBIO. The naval—because I'm—we're going to talk about Florida now. And if we ever need icebreakers down there, we've got big, big problems.

[Laughter.]

Senator RUBIO. But, I want to talk about the Cuban migrant issue and the—just the massive surge. And, in particular, the kind of level of aggressiveness that we're seeing from migrants that have been intercepted. As I said in my opening statement, when I visited the facility in Miami and got to go out and be with these folks for a few hours, I was hearing stories of migrants that were stabbing themselves, swallowing lug nuts, drinking bleach, anything that would require them to be brought onshore to go to the hospital. And so, obviously, I'm not asking you to opine on policies, but—in terms of whether they're good or bad ideas, but I am asking you to opine on the impact that our current migratory policies toward Cuba are having on the psychology and behavior of migrants who are trying to come. In essence, both wet foot, dry foot, which incentivizes people to touch dry land and ultimately the Cuban Adjustment Act, in and of itself, which says, if they arrive, they get to stay, is a contributor. And I was just hoping you could comment a little bit about the current state of affairs, how the numbers have ticked up over the last couple of years, what are current trends and conditions with regards to migration from Cuba.

Admiral ZUKUNFT. Yes. Senator—Chairman, the numbers you alluded to in your opening statement, you know, the increase from 14 to 15, and now 15 to 16—from 15 to 16 this last quarter, you know, we're up 44 percent. So, yes, the numbers are increasing.

The acts of desperation, we have not seen the likes of this before. I was involved in the Mariel boatlift. I was the commanding officer of a patrol boat back in 1980. Much different dynamics in this—you know, what we're seeing today. We're seeing repeat attempts of Cuban nationals trying to gain entry into the United States. It's not uncommon, when we have an interdiction at sea, as we start the screening process, it's not the first time for these individuals.

They will go back and look for passage a second, third, fourth, fifth—as many times as it takes. And then you see these acts of desperation, self-inflicted gunshot wounds, swallowing bleach, stabbings, and the like. And we’re seeing, you know, a more frequent occurrence of noncompliant behavior when our vessels come alongside.

And so, it is a desperate situation. At the same time, it’s a huge investment for the United States Coast Guard to provide that deterrent level. And there’s been discussions of, “Well, could we move the Coast Guard to, say, the Mediterranean Sea to deal with the refugee crisis over there?” Well, there’s a huge opportunity cost if you do so. We do have a maritime migrant challenge here in the United States. And if the United States Coast Guard is not there, then it’s now a free pass. I wouldn’t speculate that you would see a scale of Mariel, but certainly if the word is out that the Coast Guard is no longer standing the watch, I think the flow would then be unimpeded, going forward. So, it’s imperative that we have that level of persistent presence.

What I’m especially proud of is the restraint that our people show when they encounter noncompliant activity. And we do everything we can to uphold human rights concerns for these folks that, quite honestly, are looking for a better way of life.

Senator RUBIO. There was a media report that some of the migrants that had reached the lighthouse actually came with a cell phone and—ready to call local media and alert them to this. Is that accurate?

Admiral ZUKUNFT. I’m not sure about the call, but, you know, they’re on the Americans Show a Light—22—two were recovery in the water, 22 were on the light. And now, as you alluded to, the judge is—implemented an injunction to discern whether that is “feet dry” if you land on Americans Show a Light at sea. Those 22 members have been on a Coast Guard cutter for the last 26 days. But, in all likelihood, they may be on there for another 2 or 3 weeks longer.

It is a burden to our people. At the same time, we don’t have, you know, all the accommodations to provide for these individuals that are waiting to determine the outcome of their status.

Senator RUBIO. Can I just ask? As long as the migrants are on that cutter, is that cutter unable to conduct other operations?

Admiral ZUKUNFT. We do. We routinely operate, sometimes with as many as 200 migrants on our flight decks. But, it certainly does limit your operations. And those ships cannot stay out for sea indefinitely, which means you may have to crossdeck them to another ship. And every time you crossdeck someone from one ship to another, there’s always the risk of someone may fall over the side.

Senator RUBIO. Given that the current numbers are clearly straining your resources and perhaps diverting from the ability to do some other parts of your mission, if these numbers continue to increase, if there’s a dramatic, let’s say, doubling of the current numbers, is it your opinion that—at that point will deeply impact the ability of the Coast Guard to conduct other essential missions outside of migrant intercept?

Admiral ZUKUNFT. No, Chairman, as we routinely do, when we are overwhelmed in one mission area, we pull from another one.

The one we would have to pull from, though, quite frankly, would be the level of effort we're doing in the transit zone in the eastern Pacific and——

Senator RUBIO. On the—in the drug interdiction.

Admiral ZUKUNFT. Exactly.

Senator RUBIO. So, if this Cuban migrant issue gets much larger than what it is now, if it continues to grow in its trends, it is your testimony here today that you will have to pull resources from drug interdiction to deal with the migratory crisis.

Admiral ZUKUNFT. We haven't reached that threshold yet, and, under our operation called Vigilant Sentry, when we start seeing, you know, increased threat, you know, flows, there's also the possibility we could look for other assistance through our Department of Defense. We've implemented that in the past. So, that would be another possibility, as well.

Senator RUBIO. OK.

On the—I know that the recapitalization of the fleet has been identified as a priority, as a key to the long-term success of the agency. Has the current state and age of the fleet—can you talk kind of a little bit about what impact it's had on your ability to combat criminal networks?

Admiral ZUKUNFT. Our 210-foot medium-endurance cutters, one of those last night, the Coast Guard Cutter Vigorous, is in the eastern Pacific. She's home-ported on the East Coast, but she went through the Panama Canal, and she seized, you know, 600 kilos of cocaine last night, launching two boats, an armed helicopter, all at night, you know, with a crew of 75. That's a 50-year-old ship. By the time we recapitalize those ships, they will be approaching their 55-year of service. So, it is a challenge for us. We cannot do another service life extension program on our 210-foot class of ships. We may have to extend the service life out on our 17—on our 13—excuse me—270-foot medium-endurance cutters. I would much rather see us recapitalize those rather than trying to extend the service life to 50 years and beyond.

I attribute the years of service that we get out of the ships to the men and women who do the day-to-day maintenance on them. As busy as these crews are when they're out at sea, the tempo picks up when you return to port. You would think it would be the complete opposite. They've got to get that ship maintained and ready to go to put out to sea again. They deploy 185 days out of the year, but there's not—really not time to take a day off. And so, my concern is, we've been operating at this operational tempo on the backs of our people.

Senator RUBIO. In terms of technological advancement, is the Coast Guard developing or fielding unmanned aircraft, which can be launched from ships and used to assist interdiction efforts?

Admiral ZUKUNFT. We do have that in the President's budget, and we are moving out on what I would call small unmanned aerial systems, much more portable. We worked with the Navy, and we worked closely on the Fire Scout Program, and did a prototype with that. But, we recognize that we still need manned platforms, as well, to do aviation use of force, precision fire against fleeing go-fasts or launching rescue swimmers to rescue mariners in distress. You can't do that with a UAS. And so, we need a light system, a

system that doesn't come with a support tail of 15–16 people, like the Fire Scout did, which then, you know, I have to put other people ashore to support what is supposedly unmanned, but it comes with a very heavy manpower tail associated with it. So, that's why we're looking at small unmanned systems that are sea-based that extend our domain awareness, you know, to and just over the horizon using these more affordable and, in some cases, almost expendable systems.

Senator RUBIO. And finally, is there a Department of Defense or Department of Homeland Security requirement for a minimum number of ships forward deployed to conduct interdiction missions for SOUTHCOM and Joint Interagency Task Force South? And if there is such a minimum number, how often do we fall short of that requirement?

Admiral ZUKUNFT. I'll have to back-brief you on that, Senator, but we do work through the Joint Staff, in terms of resourcing. And, as you can imagine, if you look at, you know, all the demands placed on our Department of Defense today, every combatant commander does not get the resources they need to carry out their mission. The Navy is not able to meet its requirements in the western hemisphere, because of the demands placed in the Mediterranean, in the MidEast, and in the Pacific theaters, as well, which is why the Coast Guard has, you know, doubled our effort to fill the void left by the United States Navy.

I'll just add, we do a lot of work with our allies, with the Canadians, with the French, Dutch, Her Majesty's Navy, the Royal Kingdom. So, they're providing—augmenting us significantly. In fact, at one point, this past spring, we had 14 ships. Out of those, only seven of those were U.S. flag. The others were allies helping us in this western hemisphere of ours.

Senator RUBIO. Well, Admiral, I want to thank you for your service to our country, for being here today. As you saw from the attendance during a busy day, there is a lot of interest in the mission that you conduct. I have tremendous respect for the work that you and your men and women do on behalf of our country.

The hearing record is going to be remain open for—during—for 2 weeks. And, during this time, Senators will be asked to submit any questions they might have for the record. If you receive any, Admiral, I would ask, respectfully, that you submit your written answers to the committee as soon as you possibly can, given all the other work you have going on. So, don't divert resources away from drug interdiction to answer our questions, so—but, we most certainly would want to have answers at some point if you do receive any written inquiries.

And again, I thank you for appearing before us.

And, with that, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:20 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTION SUBMITTED BY HON. JOHN THUNE TO ADMIRAL PAUL F. ZUKUNFT

Question. Does the CG need any additional authorities to combat illegal fishing in the Gulf of Mexico?

Answer. No. The U.S. Coast Guard's general law enforcement authority under 14 U.S.C. § 89 is sufficient to combat illegal fishing in the Gulf of Mexico.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. DANIEL SULLIVAN TO ADMIRAL PAUL F. ZUKUNFT

Question 1. Since U.S. Interior Secretary Sally Jewell denied a life-saving reliable medical emergency access corridor from King Cove two days before Christmas in 2013, there have been a total of 44 medevacs total. Of those, 16 involved the Coast Guard and 28 were non-Coast Guard medevacs.

Instead, the Secretary continues to expect brave Coast Guardsmen to risk their lives flying dangerous evacuation missions in poor weather conditions, when this issue of emergency medical access can be solved so simply with a few miles of new road.

Last year, I asked for your thoughts on this situation and what is being required of the Coast Guard. You stated that the approximate cost was \$42,000 per medivac. My understanding is that if the Coast Guard executes the medevacs from Cold Bay where there is Coast Guard presence during the crabbing and fishing season, the cost is approximately \$42,000. However, I'm told that outside of fishing season, the Coast Guard comes from Kodiak with costs of approximately \$210,000. Do you know this to be true?

Answer. The subject estimates are accurate based upon FY 2013 "outside government" hourly rates tables corresponding to the operation of an MH-60T launched from Cold Bay, AK or an MH-60T launched from Kodiak, AK, with an HC-130H cover aircraft also launched from Kodiak.

The "outside government" rate is the fully burdened rate, which in addition to costs such as fuel, salaries, and maintenance, also includes costs such as pension benefits, operating asset depreciation and general and administrative costs.

Question 2. I am told that the Coast Guard is only called when no other private medevac service can come because of extreme bad weather. Is that correct?

Answer. That is correct. Commercial providers are the primary mode of MEDEVAC response to the Cold Bay/King Cove area.

The Coast Guard typically receives requests for MEDEVAC when commercial providers are unable to respond due to night time flight restrictions, cross wind, ceiling and other weather limitations, or their own availability.

Question 3. Is there a specific procedure that the Coast Guard must go through before the emergency medevac is approved? Can you describe that procedure?

Answer. When deciding whether a case is sufficiently urgent to justify the risks involved with a MEDEVAC, the Search and Rescue Mission Coordinator (SMC) will consult numerous sources prior to making a response request. SMC will obtain advice from medical personnel, preferably Coast Guard or Department of Defense medical personnel familiar with Search and Rescue operations, consider emergency medical capabilities of Coast Guard crews, and consider the operating characteristics of Coast Guard Search and Rescue units.

The SMC and medical personnel will weigh the risks of the mission against the risks to the patient and the responding resource.

This review of risks includes the patient's clinical status, probable patient outcome if MEDEVAC is delayed or not performed, medical capabilities of the responding Coast Guard personnel and equipment, prevailing weather, sea and other environmental conditions.

After a MEDEVAC mission is approved by SMC, the final decision to conduct the MEDEVAC rests with the aircraft commander, cutter commanding officer, or coxswain based on their on-scene risk assessment.

Question 4. So, that puts both the sick/injured, medical personnel (usually a local nurse) and the brave Coast Guard crew at enormous personal risk. Is this correct? As you noted when we discussed previously, the real cost that is beyond the finances—there are the real costs associated with the risk to the men and women conducting the medivacs.

Answer. Helicopter Medical Evacuation (MEDEVAC) can be hazardous to both patient and crew because of environmental conditions, proximity to obstacles and from dangers inherent in transferring a patient from land to helicopter or from vessel to helicopter.

Our aircrews are trained to exercise on-scene initiative to assess and articulate the risk, and balance it against the probable gain of a proposed course of action.

We are committed to doing everything we can to assist others, but are also committed to doing so safely and without undue risk to our Coast Guard men and women.

Question 5. There's been a lot of attention paid to human trafficking and IUU fishing in the Western Pacific region, where the Coast Guard has a prominent role in deterring illegal activity on the ocean. The U.S. is responsible for a lot of ocean out there, both through our territories and with our compact of free association allies such as Palau. I think the Coast Guard does a good job with the assets it has, but you don't have enough assets on the water to be really effective. Are you looking at deploying new technologies, such as airborne radar systems, that can help you gather enforcement-quality evidence against pirate vessels and their illegal activity, as well as increasing our maritime domain awareness capabilities?

Answer. The Coast Guard continually assesses developing technologies for applicability to our statutory mission sets; however, the Coast Guard does not have a capability requirement to specifically gather enforcement-quality evidence against pirate vessels. Instead, the Coast Guard utilizes existing radars, forward-looking infrared cameras, and other surveillance sensors onboard cutters and aircraft to assist in maritime domain awareness in support of all Service missions.

Question 6. Regulations calling for the use of Automated Identification Systems (AIS) equipment were implemented on March 1st of this year, yet questions remain as to when vessels must operate this equipment. Vessel operators fear that the use of AIS equipment over fishing grounds would reveal the most productive locations, jeopardizing their livelihood. It is my understanding that the intent of the regulation is to improve navigational safety and, should AIS use be limited to Vessel Traffic Service areas, it would successfully accomplish this objective. Will you consider whether Automated Identification Systems (AIS) should use be limited to Vessel Traffic Service areas?

Answer. Carriage of the Automatic Identification System (AIS) by commercial vessels greater than 65 feet in length is required on all U.S. navigable waters. There are 11 Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) areas nationwide. They comprise a small percentage of the Nation's navigable waterways. Limiting AIS carriage to only VTS areas would severely limit its utility and would deprive mariners of a proven navigation safety tool in many other heavily travelled waterways.

Question 7. The intent of Congress for the Alternate Safety Compliance Program was that the program was to be developed in coordination with the fishing fleets using statistical analysis of recent incidents to ensure the program addressed actual gaps in safety in the fishing fleets around the US. It is my understanding that to date the data has not been analyzed—some necessary data isn't even available—and the majority of fleets around the U.S. have not been contacted. The CG is expected to issue new guidance in January, before seeking comment. If final guidance does not come out until sometime after January 2017, the fleet will have a very short window to come up to compliance to meet the January 2020 implementation. The goal is to have targeted regulations developed in cooperation with industry that addresses specific gaps in safety based on data analysis. Will the Coast Guard meet with industry to develop the general guidance and fleet specific annexes before it is released?

Answer. The Coast Guard is committed to meeting Congress' intent to address fishing vessel safety. Having received input from the Commercial Fishing Safety Advisory Committee (CFSAC) and the fishing industry at numerous meetings and workshops, the Coast Guard suspended development of an Alternative Safety Compliance Program (ASCP) and instead initiated development of an Enhanced Oversight Program (EOP). The EOP will draw upon existing Captain of the Port authorities, can be prescribed by policy, and will build upon the existing commercial fishing

vessel safety examination regime in 46 C.F.R. Pt. 28. Recognizing that an ASCP would require new regulations, the Coast Guard considers the release of the EOP in January 2017 as an interim measure to meet Congress' intent of an ASCP, until such time as we can publish any necessary additional requirements by regulations. In addition to implementing the EOP, the Coast Guard will issue voluntary safety guidelines and best practices for all fishing vessels that will expand upon the requirements set forth in 46 C.F.R. Pt. 28 as well as those proposed in the NPRM published on 21 June 2016. The Coast Guard will continue meeting with CFSAC and the fishing industry to fully develop the EOP and safety guidelines.

Question 8. Given the concern with ensuring compliance, will they CG consider delaying implementation to three years after the guidance is released?

Answer. The EOP is a policy action that will not place any additional requirements on commercial fishing vessels, beyond what 46 C.F.R. Pt. 28 mandates. New regulations to develop an ASCP would go through a public comment period and take into account any feedback on implementation and compliance.

Question 9. The U.S. Coast Guard's recent change to the ROUPV credential will severely impact the guiding industry, commercial lodges, and local citizens of Western Alaska. Formerly, guides could acquire a ROUPV license for operation on all freshwater rivers or lakes in Western Alaska after 120 days of experience anywhere in the country and a classroom component. Guides utilizing this system were primarily small boats operating on small rivers and streams making up larger waterway systems. Recently imposed drastic regulatory changes will cripple these local operators.

What are the Coast Guard's plans and timeline for addressing the Citizen Petition to Change Regulations Governing the Restricted Operator of an Uninspected Passenger Vessel ("ROUPV") Credential to Alleviate the Disproportionate Adverse Effects on Western Alaska (filed May 16, 2016)?

Answer. The Coast Guard is committed to working collaboratively with the petitioners on their concerns regarding the regulations. Because the existing regulations provide the Coast Guard with flexibility to address many of the petitioners' concerns, the Coast Guard responded to the request on August 2, 2016, by denying the petition. In the response, the Coast Guard explained that it is imperative for operators to have the necessary knowledge and training to conduct these operations safely, and that the regulations in question are appropriate. We further explained that many of their concerns can be addressed by updating Coast Guard policy.

Question 10. What are the agency's plans to actually involve Alaskans in the decision-making process this time around, as there were no meetings held in Alaska on the proposed rulemaking before it went into effect, and there was no notice given to Western Alaska guides or lodges prior to the final rule being enacted?

Answer. Coast Guard Sector Anchorage contacted the lodge owners to collaborate on a process. The lodge owners communicated to the Coast Guard that their preference is to meet after the guiding season is over.

Question 11. Have any hearing dates or locations on the petition been set?

Answer. There were no hearings held on the petition for rulemaking.

Question 12. What timeline has the Coast Guard planned to address the petition? The guiding season is already underway.

Answer. The Coast Guard responded to the petition on August 2, 2016. The Coast Guard will meet with lodge owners to discuss ROUPV following the close of the guiding season.

Question 13. Is the Coast Guard planning to enact emergency relief from the effect of these regulations before a long-term, more permanent solution is reached to address the regulations?

Answer. The Coast Guard is developing an updated policy letter that will clarify the existing regulatory flexibility for implementation of 46 C.F.R. 11.467(g).

Question 14. Harnessing new technologies to replace traditional assets for the performance of mission requirements can optimize the use of Coast Guard resources across all mission areas. In the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2015 (Public Law 114-120), Section 606 requires a report to Congress on the use of possible alternatives, such as the use of satellite surveillance technology, to carry out the International Ice Patrol mission. What is the status of completing this report required by Sec. 606?

Answer. The Coast Guard's Congressional Report entitled: "U.S. Coast Guard Report on International Ice Patrol" has been drafted and the Coast Guard anticipates delivery prior to the end of Fiscal Year 2016.

Question 15. Can you give me any preliminary information from your review on the use of satellite surveillance technology to detect icebergs in the North Atlantic

as part of the Coast Guard's International Ice Patrol mission? For example, will the review do the following: Look at the use of both radar and optical satellite image data to provide information for operational and programmatic use?

Answer. A report required by the 2015 CGAA on International Ice Patrol (IIP) operations contains the results of the Coast Guard's review of current methods and alternatives. The report is in the final stages of review and is expected to be released before the end of the year.

Yes. The report examines alternatives to IIP's traditional aerial reconnaissance, including the use of both radar and optical satellite image data.

Question 16. Compare satellite surveillance to the aircraft patrols used in the International Ice Patrol mission for accuracy, reliability, environmental constraints, and cost?

Answer. The report examines alternatives, including satellite surveillance, to IIP's traditional aerial reconnaissance. Each alternative was evaluated against the following criterion: (1) ability to provide timely data on ice conditions with the highest possible resolution and accuracy; (2) ability to operate in all weather conditions or any time of day; (3) and cost-effectiveness against the cost of current operations.

Question 17. Consider whether satellite surveillance can be used to concurrently support and complement the aircraft operations being employed now?

Answer. Yes. Additionally, the Coast Guard is currently supplementing aerial reconnaissance by acquiring commercial synthetic aperture radar (SAR) satellite reconnaissance images. When imagery is acquired in the northern sections of the IIP operational area, icebergs identified can be directly added to IIP's warnings to mariners.

Question 18. If satellite surveillance can be used for the International Ice Patrol, are there other mission needs that the aircraft now used for those patrols could be freed up to be used for?

Answer. The fixed wing aircraft hours dedicated to the IIP mission represent 1 percent of the Coast Guard's fixed wing aircraft hours overall. If these flight hours were no longer needed for the IIP mission, they would be assigned to other mission areas.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. BILL NELSON TO
ADMIRAL PAUL F. ZUKUNFT

Question 1. National Security Cutters—Admiral Zukunft, to date the Coast Guard has completed six National Security Cutters, at an average cost of \$695 million per ship. These ships are designed to be highly capable, multi-purpose successors to our aging fleet of High Endurance Cutters, which are now over 50 years old. How would you characterize their performance so far, and the Nation's return on investment, as these vessels have begun performing their duties, particularly regarding drug enforcement and our national security concerns in the Western Hemisphere?

Answer. Between Fiscal Year 2009 and Fiscal Year 2016 to date, the interdiction rate of the Coast Guard's three operational National Security Cutters (NSC) has far eclipsed that of our High Endurance Cutters. NSCs have prevented \$2.8 billion of illegal drugs from reaching the U.S. Of note, the CGC BERTHOLF interdicted 22 metric tons of cocaine in one patrol, including a record eight metric ton cocaine seizure from a semi-submersible in the Eastern Pacific.

NSCs are unsurpassed in range, sea-keeping, and C4ISR capabilities. They are the only non-DoD maritime asset able to provide specialized intelligence collection and sharing capability in support of DHS missions, providing a tremendous strategic and tactical advantage.

The Coast Guard's most effective offshore interdiction package is a flight deck equipped cutter with an Airborne Use of Force (AUF) helicopter working with a Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA), multiple over the horizon cutter boats and a highly trained boarding team, all of which are fully supported by the intelligence community. NSCs are ideally suited to deliver these unique capabilities.

Question 2. Offshore Patrol Cutters—Admiral Zukunft, while the National Security Cutters are providing exceptional service, my understanding is that the true workhorses of the drug and migrant interdiction mission in the Caribbean are the legacy Medium Endurance Cutters, or MEC's. Most of these cutters were commissioned over 50 years ago, yet are still patrolling out there today accomplishing this very important mission. How would you describe the current situation regarding the reliability and mission readiness of the MEC fleet, and what challenges are they imposing on accomplishing the Coast Guard's interdiction missions?

Answer. In the past six years, six MECs have been sent to emergency dry docks because of unscheduled maintenance. In Fiscal Year 2015 alone, the MEC fleet recorded 184 lost cutter days due to unscheduled dockside maintenance threatening our ability to project persistent offshore presence. Recapitalizing this aging fleet with the Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC) is the agency's highest acquisition priority. Continued progress is absolutely vital to recapitalizing the MECs, some of which will be over 55 years old when the first OPC is delivered. In concert with the extended range and capability of the NSC and the enhanced coastal patrol capability of the Fast Response Cutter (FRC), OPCs will be the backbone of the Coast Guard's strategy to project and maintain offshore presence. We are on track to award OPC Detail Design by the end of the Fiscal Year. This will be a significant milestone in the acquisition of these important assets.

Question 3. Readiness of Coast Guard—Admiral Zukunft, I understand that accomplishing these complex interdiction missions at sea requires maintaining a “continuous presence”, *i.e.*, ensuring that ships and aircraft are continuously monitoring the smuggling routes used for drugs and migrants. For example, if a migrant smuggling route is left unguarded and a few boats successfully complete the journey and phone home to report this, we could very quickly end up with an unintended mass migration on our hands, placing thousands of lives in jeopardy as they attempt a very perilous journey. We have already discussed the readiness issues of the Coast Guard's aging fleet of aircraft and ships. What impact do these increasingly frequent failures have on your ability to maintain this “continuous presence”?

Answer. In the past six years, six MECs have been sent to emergency dry docks. In Fiscal Year 2015, the MEC fleet recorded 184 lost cutter days due to unscheduled dockside maintenance threatening our ability to project persistent offshore presence. Recapitalizing this aging fleet with the Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC) is the Coast Guard's highest acquisition priority. Continued progress is absolutely vital to recapitalizing the MECs, some of which will be over 55 years old when the first OPC is delivered. I am pleased to report we are on track to award OPC Detail Design by the end of this Fiscal Year. These new assets will help the Coast Guard maintain robust and effective at-sea presence to detect, deter, and interdict threats as far from our shores as possible.

Question 4. Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON)—Admiral Zukunft, I understand that the Jacksonville, FL based Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON), has proven an extremely effective tool in both the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific for interdicting so-called ‘go-fast’ vessels, speedboats carrying large amounts of narcotics from Central and South America to the United States. These helicopters use special tactics and highly-trained marksmen to shoot out and disable the engines of these smugglers, so a boarding team can then intercept them on the water and detain them. How do these teams receive this specialized training, and why has the use of these teams so often been linked to successful drug seizures?

Answer. U.S. Coast Guard HITRON pilots are highly trained and specialized in Airborne Use of Force Counter Drug (AUF-CD) operations, tactics, and legal authorities. The pilots complete an extensive ground syllabus followed by numerous day and night AUF flights to test flight skills and judgment; culminating their training in a minimum 30 day deployment with an AUF-CD Mission Commander to gain operational experience.

In addition to the extensive pilot training and certification process, the Coast Guard Precision Marksman program has its own rigorous qualification procedure. All shooters build upon the fundamentals of rifle marksmanship through course curriculum and practical application to include operation and maintenance of the precision weapon system, positional shooting, sighting systems, and long range target engagement. Candidates receive training in day and night shooting proficiency at various distances with precision and area fire weapon systems, precision shooting from a helicopter day and night, and once qualified, conduct mandatory sustainment training both on the ground and in the air to continue professional development, hone skills, and maintain proficiency.

The specialized capability of Airborne Use of Force (AUF) is a valuable force multiplier for operational commanders. A helicopter's maneuverability, range airspeed, hovering capability, and ability to operate at both high and low altitudes make it an exceptional platform for delivering precision rifle fire in order to disable and interdict Non-Compliant Vessels. Additionally, AUF aircrews are able to reduce risks associated with boarding operations by providing precision cover fire for responding boarding teams. The Coast Guard's most effective force package is a flight deck equipped cutter with an AUF helicopter working with a Maritime Patrol Aircraft, multiple over the horizon cutter boats, and a highly trained boarding team

that is fully supported by the intelligence community. HITRON AUF capability provides the most decisive and deliberate “End Game” in the Coast Guard’s arsenal to combat illicit maritime activities.

Question 5. Narco-Submarines—Admiral Zukunft, we know that the manufacture and distribution of illegal narcotics are an incredibly lucrative trade, one that incentivizes cartels to go to great lengths and expense to innovate new methods to avoid detection. I have heard more and more accounts of the Coast Guard interdicting so-called narco-submarines—semi-submersible, and even fully-submersible, ships, built in the depths of the jungles of Colombia and Ecuador to move massive amounts of drugs while remaining nearly undetectable. I understand that Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman was among the first to make use of these submarines, and hired naval architects to devise a means for constructing these relatively sophisticated vessels in primitive conditions under the deep jungle canopy. How is the Coast Guard doing at keeping pace with advancements in technology these cartels are employing, and what can we do to ensure you have the resources you need?

Answer. The Coast Guard is making great progress in its modernization efforts through the acquisition of new surface assets such as the National Security Cutter (NSC), Fast Response Cutter (FRC) and upcoming Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC). Both the National Security Cutter (NSC) and planned Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC) provide a robust system of C4ISR sensors that will enhance surveillance, detection, classification, identification, and prosecution performance in the offshore environment.

Leveraging this system, the Coast Guard utilizes intelligence sourced from the intelligence community, including DOD, and domestic law enforcement agencies, via the Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-S) to provide all resource fusion and direct tactical cueing of assets to facilitate interdictions. Maritime drug smuggling interdictions yield intelligence and critical access to TCO networks, further expanding the Nation’s ability to identify, target, and defeat illicit networks.

The Coast Guard continuously seeks to develop effective intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance methods and technologies to stay ahead of this evolving threat.

Question 6. Recapitalization of Offshore Patrol Cutters—Admiral Zukunft, You have previously stated to this Committee the urgent need for “investments in a 21st century Coast Guard.” In February of 2014, the Coast Guard awarded contracts to three shipbuilding groups to design new models of Offshore Patrol Cutters, blueprints and specifications of which are due at the end of this fiscal year. As your Service approaches the selection of one of your shipbuilding vendors’ propositions, what qualities will you consider as top priorities in the design of these new vessels?

Answer. The key performance parameters established by the Coast Guard define the top priorities for successful operation of the Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC), and these attributes play an essential role in its design. Significant effort has gone into developing requirements and a design with the necessary operational capability for sea-keeping, speed, and range. Additionally, the requirements were written to achieve a structurally robust platform capable of supporting the Coast Guard’s mission profile. Coast Guard habitability standards and attention to human systems integration were also considered. The OPC design will provide a high degree of functionality for workshops, offices, living, and mission spaces, and will meet the latest environmental standards. The electronics and sensors will incorporate state of the market technologies that support open systems architecture. Finally, the Coast Guard values affordability and will consider how each provides the best overall value to the government.

Question 7. How will those qualities allow for ships that are both long-lasting and adaptable to technological advances in the 21st century?

Answer. The OPC Program is based on state of the market technology, but is being designed to account for potential changes that accompany a vessel designed for, and projected to last, many years. For example, the OPC requirements were developed to allow the vessel to adjust to changing missions such as adaptability for future helicopters, Small Unmanned Aerial Systems, and boats. Additionally, vessel support systems for heating, cooling, ventilation, and power are designed with service life growth margins, which facilitate future equipment and technology upgrades. The open systems architecture will allow for technology refresh of electronics and sensors to support mission system upgrades. Habitability, functional arrangement, and work-life considerations will result in improved crew comfort for enhanced mission effectiveness. The 30 year service life design will ensure a sound platform for the Coast Guard well into the 21st Century.

Question 8. Resources Important to Coast Guard—Admiral Zukunft, what is the single most important resource the Coast Guard needs today, but does not have?

Answer. My biggest concern is that I have Coast Guard men and women protecting our Nation on ships that are older than their parents. Our Medium Endurance Cutters are in desperate need of replacement and that is why the Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC) is my highest priority. I am grateful for the strong support we have received from the Secretary and Congress for this important acquisition, and am pleased to report we are on track to award OPC Detail Design by the end of this Fiscal Year.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. RICHARD BLUMENTHAL TO
ADMIRAL PAUL F. ZUKUNFT

Question 1. Coast Guard Museum—The Coast Guard has played a vital role in our country's safety and security for 226 years. But this important pillar of our Nation's homeland security is the only uniformed service without a national museum. The other branches all have museums where Americans and visitors from around the world can learn more about their history and traditions. And rightfully so. But not the Coast Guard.

Thankfully, we're righting that wrong. Until last year, there was a significant, sizeable hurdle that held us back from fully realizing the goal of funding and building a museum. That hurdle came in the form of a law that prohibited the Coast Guard from using its funds for museum construction. With the help of this committee and the Coast Guard, we fixed that in the Coast Guard Authorization bill the president signed in February. The Coast Guard will now be able to invest resources in getting the museum off the ground. We've already secured \$5 million from appropriators for next year's budget.

Now I understand there's a new challenge. Some have questioned whether FEMA will even allow the building of the museum in downtown New London, concerned by the museum's location in a possible flood plain. My office has been in close contact with FEMA, which so far seems willing to work collaboratively to address these issues.

Admiral Zukunft, The museum association has a lead role in construction, but the Coast Guard has an important role, too. Do I have your commitment to ensure this critical effort succeeds and the museum gets built as the present site in New London by 2020? Even if FEMA determines that some extra precautions must be taken to prevent flooding issues, do I have your commitment to ensure that the Coast Guard and FEMA—both of which are agencies of the Department of Homeland Security—will collaborate to ensure we build in downtown New London?

Answer. I fully support the National Coast Guard Museum (NCGM) project in New London, and the Coast Guard will continue to provide guidance and expertise as resources allow. The Coast Guard is not involved in the construction of the proposed NCGM facility, but continues to make its experts and artifact collections available to the NCGM Association. The NCGM Association's plan to complete construction by 2020 is dependent upon a number of factors, including its ability to raise funds through donations and to obtain permitting approvals from state, local, and Federal agencies. We are aware of the challenges associated with building on the proposed site, and remain committed to supporting the NCGMA in satisfying FEMA and other permitting agency requirements. The Coast Guard supports the construction of a National Coast Guard Museum in New London, but has limited resources to contribute given ongoing efforts to recapitalize our aging vessels, aircraft, and shore infrastructure.

Question 2. Coast Guard Band—Last year we heard some troubling news. After a century of service in Connecticut, the Coast Guard was looking closely at uprooting the dozens of members of the Coast Guard band and shipping them off to Washington, DC.

This may seem like a small, insignificant relocation of a few personnel, but it's actually something that could have a massive, profound impact on my state. In a letter to you, I stressed that the relocation of the Coast Guard Band could have far-reaching economic and cultural consequences for my constituents, yet the process to review moving the band was shrouded in mystery, with scant publicly available information justifying these efforts.

My colleagues on the appropriations committee are working with me to ensure this is prevented next year in the Fiscal Year 2017 appropriations bill. There's always a chance that important bill—with its critical language blocking a band move—could not become law. Instead, Congress could passing a continuing resolution, waiting for the next administration before taking up a major spending bill.

Admiral Zukunft, If the spending bill unfortunately flounders, can I get your commitment to keep the band in New London permanently?

Answer. Following a careful review, the Coast Guard has decided to keep the band located at the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Conn. The decision is not contingent upon the passing of the FY 2017 appropriations bill.



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